1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

unexpected honor overcomes the recipient to such an extent that she is seized with violent convulsions.

Noticing that the hour is growing late, the Bishop abruptly ends his talk. There follows a prayer, led by one of the deacons and chanted rather than spoken. At the end of each line the man's voice catches on a high sob verging on hysteria, and those in the congregation murmur an almost inaudible echo of the speaker's plea. The other deacons join in the recital and in the wild sobbing. At the conclusion of the prayer a high pitch of excitement is reached.

It is now time for the Bishop to take leave of his flock. Slowly, reverently, his attendants bring him his top coat and high Stetson hat. From his pocket "Daddy" draws out a large white handkerchief which he waves slowly in accompaniment to the closing hymn, a corrupt version of *Nearer My God To Thee*. The worshipers, too, wave their handkerchiefs in solemn tribute to their departing leader.

Shortly after a visit from the Bishop we pursued our course of research in Brownville. We found a number of people who had been named for week days or the month in which they had been born. Thursday Jones,* when questioned about this particular custom, replied, "Dey name me dat way jis cuz uh happen tuh be bawn on Tursday, I guess. Sech tings seem tuh be in our fambly. I hab an uncle whose name is Monday Collins. It seem tuh come duh fus ting tuh folks' mine tuh name duh babies fuh duh day dey is bawn on." [20]

Another man ** told us, "We hab membuhs in our fambly name Monday, Friday, July an Augus. Dey jis didn tink ub any name tuh call em but duh day dey wuz bawn.[20] Deah wuz two brudduhs call July an Augus an deah two sons wuz name aftuh um. Some uh deze names go all duh way back tuh slabery time. Duh chillun jis name aftuh duh kin."

* *Thursday Jones, Brownville.*
** *John Blackshear, 625 Grapevine Avenue.*

PIN POINT

674 anybody view uh face aw lay deah hans on uh[31] wuz sho a
682 pity.[36]
764 "Ebrybody wuz at duh fewnul. Come frum miles roun tuh pay deah las respecks tuh a po wife murduhed by uh huzbun on Friday duh thuteent.

"Duh body wuz brung frum duh unduhtakuh's pahluh straight tuh Sweet Fiel ub Eden Chuch at duh Pint. Chuch so crowded yuh caahn hahdly see duh coffin up in front. We sing hymns, an den wen duh singin hab die out an yuh could heah jis a lill hummin heah an deah, somebody stan up an say, 'Catherine De Lanzy wuz a sistuh ub duh Lawd.' 'She sho wuz,' somebody else say. 'She wuz a chile ub Jesus an she walk in duh way ub righteousness.'

"Dis staht off duh whole congregation an deah mustuh bin neah a hundud people git up an gib testimony bout Cather-
• [152] ine's goodness. Some people cry an scream wen dey tell duh congregation wut a fine uhmun she bin.

"Den duh remains wuz took tuh duh cimiterry neah duh chuch an buried. Duh whole time we sing hymns an sway tuh duh soun uh duh music. Ebrybody tro a hanful uh dut in duh grabe an[38] wen duh grabe digguhs fix duh moun, we put some uh Catherine's tings on duh top. Deah wuz a lill flowuh vase wid duh bottom knock out, an a lamp chimney, an some puhfumery bottles, an duh pitchuh she made ice watuh in jis fo Bo-Cat tuk uh off.[47] Den duh ministuh nounce dat duh fewnul suhmon wuz tuh be preach at duh annyul memorial wen dey pray fuh ebrybody who die durin duh yeah.[43] An den das all an we wehn home."

551 "Why was Limerick De Lancy called Bo-Cat?" we asked. "Deah ain no signifcunse tuh dat. I hab a frien dat ebry-body call Friday but[30] uh name is Lula. I hab a cousin name Augus Bond an a son name May Bud simply cuz he wuz bawn in May. One uh muh brothuhs wuz call Baby Head cuz at birth he wuz a tiny baby wid sech a great big head.

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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of the cotton gin. On the Sea Islands indigo planters marked time and clung to their slaves, although their new relationship with Great Britain cut off their monopoly of indigo profits. Shortly, a new commodity, sea island cotton, proved to be a vastly profitable substitute for indigo. There was never a question as to whether or not slavery would survive in South Carolina and Georgia.[18]

Postwar South Carolina settled back into a system of slavery which was unbending in its oppression. Signs of brutality and harshness were clearly visible. One 1785 traveler was awestruck by the natural beauty of the state, but also mused on how quickly "heaven's best gifts" were forgotten, "as well as the bountiful giver." Upon visiting a structure jocosely referred to as the "sugar house," the observer was repulsed by what he saw. Here Charleston slaves were punished. The place contained "dreadful machinery" on which slaves were confined and suspended. "I marked the scourge which was tinged with human blood and other apparatus of more than savage barbarity." More revolting than the "machinery" said the observer, was the "viewing bench" designed for "such spectators as chose to regale themselves with a view of the agony of suffering humanity." How was it possible, wondered the traveler, that "a people who have just risen up from the struggles of virtue and liberty should be so insensible of their inestimable blessings . . . as to consign to sining and dispair creatures like themselves and to triumph in their destress." Another example comes from Georgia. Philadelphia physician Benjamin Rush noted that on the Sea Island plantations of Pierce Butler, the overseer, Mr. Mitchell, whipped slaves "til they laughed."—"Pain," said Rush, "changed to pleasure."[19]

Whatever mechanisms of escapism prompted this "hysterical" reaction to whipping, it is doubtful that pain was turning to pleasure as the usually sensitive Dr. Rush believed. But the statement represents more than an ignorant comment about an oppressive system, since the incident took place on a Butler plantation. This latter fact demonstrates the limitations inherent in viewing bondage from what may seem to be a redeeming ideology—paternalism. While Butler himself can probably be considered as close to any planter in representing "paternalism," this only reveals the inadequacy of the term in describing master-slave relationships. He was known for buying slaves in family units and for trying to keep them together on his plantations. He was also remembered by his old house slaves for having been a caring master. But Butler was often absent, and

3: Creel H-4 (no date) 1988
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prevent the kind of defensive acts which the planters anticipated would cease. Flight, theft, and reluctance to labor were means of undermining plantation order and were acts of resistance that continued to plague planters although more and more blacks became "converted."[48] True, they did not rise in revolt. Memories of the consequences of failed rebellion attempts and strong kinship ties encouraged another type of resistance involving less individual risk while creating more collective energy. The goal after all was freedom. Doctrines of the New Testament exposed the Gullahs to a kind of freedom in a spiritual sense but also upheld their right to physical liberty and equality.

Gullah reaction to Christianity under Methodist tutelage was complex. On the one hand, the slaves responded to the warmth and tolerance demonstrated by missionaries. Acts of sincerity and kindness induced the slaves to take an interest in Methodist teachings. Once Gullahs applied Christianity to their own daily lives, they grasped how its tenets could, in some ways, reflect the nature of their experiences as a people. On the other hand, the paradox inherent in Christian teaching as presented by the Methodists did not escape them. Gullahs rejected doctrines instructing them to be dutiful and obedient to slave masters, but embraced the teachings about the suffering of Christ, the resurrection, and the impartiality of a future judge who would right past wrongs. One finds no evidence of spirituals applauding an obedient slave, admonishing a disobedient one, or warning a slave against the retribution extracted by God for "crimes" against a slave master. The benne seed ritual evinced just the opposite implication. Contrary to the planter's desire, slaves did not fear "another tribunal," and as "Christians," continued stealing corn and rice, burning cotton, and fleeing to the swamps and marshes. If anything, the introduction of Christianity among the Gullahs enhanced their justification for deploring the system of bondage, and provided sound arguments for what was sensed all along—the equality of humankind.

The strongest reaction against Methodism existed because of the cultural barrier between missionaries and Gullahs. Although early white Methodism accepted emotional expressions as signs of godliness, missionaries among the Gullahs emphasized a primarily stodgy instructional approach to Christianity. Methodists permitted and applauded the emotional outpourings characterizing Gullah spirituals. But other physical manifestations were often viewed as "ungodly." Missionaries noted that

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Gullahs were "easily excited," and claimed that it was necessary "to instruct them in distinguishing between animal feeling and a real work of grace." Methodists frowned upon Gullah paroxysms, not viewing these as manifestations of Christian fervor but as non-Christian or "natural" means of expressive outlet, born of older traditions. In any case, black impetuosity had to be eradicated just as the violins and banjos had to be silenced. Generally speaking, Methodism among the Gullahs can be partly described as E. P. Thompson implicitly viewed it among British workers—a religion of the heart that sometimes attempted to stifle spontaneity of the mind and soul.[69] Slaves were rarely allowed to be themselves in the presence of Methodist emissaries. This fact, coupled with Gullah preference for a presentation of religion (or a religious presentation) in more original and familiar terms, lost the Methodist church many black converts.

Acceptance of Christianity by the Gullahs, as presented by their Methodist instructors, was more of a process of coming to terms than a total commitment. Christianity was incorporated into, but did not immediately supersede, all of their previously held beliefs and practices. The missionaries realized this, reported it with disappointment, and hoped for a better day. Such was the case with the adult generation of Gullahs in the 1830s, and this continued to be a major factor in the 1840s as well.[70] On the isolated Sea Islands a certain Old World cultural similitude contributed to the retention of communal and cultural components. Traditions inspired by Africanity and infused with Gullah folk Christianity remained identifiable well past the antebellum years. Nevertheless, Africanisms outlasting the capture, the long march, and the culminating humiliation of foreign servitude had to be preserved in a vestigial state. In addition, commingling of various ethnic groups indicates that cultural diffusion was also an important factor as native ceremonies and customs were renewed and exchanged. Therefore, what was retained of African religion and spirituality was culled from the customs, beliefs, and practices of a number of West African peoples. Thus Gullah-English dialect may be a pidgin influenced mainly by Tshi (Gold Coast), KiKongo (Kongo-Angola), and Mande (Upper Guinea) linguistic patterns. But Gullah spiritual and communitarian features bear strong resemblance to traditions of Upper Guinea and BaKongo peoples. When the Methodists arrived among the Gullahs, they probably found a syncretism of African customs and practices sprinkled with snatches of Protestantism borrowed

41 Caravan & Caravan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989
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Johns Island

Rev. A. C. Jenkins

ANY MINISTER WHO DOESN'T TAP INTO THOSE DEEP FEELINGS WILL NOT SURVIVE HERE

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I want to bring a world view into the church—a view that includes justice and liberation in Latin America and in South Africa. My challenge is to make it real to the people on Johns Island, and if it is real for them, they want to shout about it. The way I can touch those feelings is to end my sermon with the words to one of the old songs.

Any minister who doesn't tap into those deep feelings will not survive here. The people will go elsewhere. I love serving on Johns Island. Before I was here I was at an elite church in Charleston. Amens were few due to a different worship experience.

Mr. Gerald Mackey

I TAKE MY TAPE RECORDER TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY

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I enjoy the older people. I'm always around them, and I talk with them often. I enjoy the singing. In fact I take my tape recorder to church every Sunday, hoping for one of the old spirituals raised from the floor. Then I play them all through the week on my stereo here or in my car. It's very uplifting. I don't miss any opportunity I get to hear the older people sing. To me, that's pride. I really enjoy listening to them and I think it's great that they have managed to preserve that aspect of our history.

I'm afraid that eventually after all these people are gone that the younger people will not feel as comfortable carrying on. I wish it wouldn't happen, though.

8: Smith Q-4,5 (no date) 1926
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South Carolina

SPIRITUALS

533 The Gullahs abundantly possess the characteristic Negro gifts of rhythm, quick emotionalism," and harmony. From these, music inevitably comes. They sing many kinds of songs,—work-songs, boat-songs," shout-songs, and spirituals, but the spirituals, or prayer-songs, outrank in number and interest all other varieties.

As might be expected from background and environment, the spirituals of the low-country Negroes are like those found elsewhere, except that they are more primitive in quality, more fluid and less standardized, ruder in text, more pathetic in tone, and more plaintive in music.

Each time a spiritual is sung it is a new thing. Rarely does one hear a spiritual sung twice in exactly the same way. It is not static or final, but dynamic and growing, for it is the creature of oral tradition" and fully exemplifies every possibility of variation associated with oral tradition and communal transmission.

New spirituals are constantly being made," either by

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[152] [113] "For an early description of the frenzy of emotionalism reached by Negroes in singing a favorite spiritual like "Jesus said He wouldn't die no mo'," see Elizabeth Kilham, "Sketches in Color, IV," *Putnam's Magazine*, March, 1870, pp. 307 and 308.

"Two good boat-songs, as well as a spiritual, a gospel hymn, and a miscellaneous song (all with words and music), are to be found in Marcellus S. Whaley, *The Old Types Pass*, Christopher Publishing Co., Boston, 1925.

[113] "At least it was in the past, before the Negro folk-tradition came in for the wide attention it is now receiving both in sociology, music, and published criticisms. See Margaret Widdemer's, "Gathering Treasures Among Negro Folk Songs," *The Literary Digest International Book Review*, June, 1926, pp. 423, 424, for a convenient and sane review of four recent publications: Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, Harvard University Press; Emmet Kennedy, *Mellows*, Boni and Liveright; James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Spirituals*, The Viking Press; Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, University of North Carolina Press. Since her review, two other books have been added to the contemporary list: James Weldon Johnson, *The Second Book of Negro Spirituals*, The Viking Press, 1926; William Arms Fisher, *Seventy Negro Spirituals*, Oliver Ditson Co., 1926. Mr. Fisher's twelve-page introduction is particularly valuable for its scholarly exposition of the history of the spirituals in American music.

"Compare the statement of Professors Odum and Johnson (*Negro Workaday Songs*, University of North Carolina Press, 1926, p. 188): "There seems to be an impression abroad to the effect that the making of Negro spirituals stopped long ago. On the contrary, it is quite probable that more spirituals are being made today than during the days of slavery."

Mr. Fisher is undeservedly hard on recent examples: "In both texts and music the post-war Spirituals lack the elemental vigor, directness, naturalness and spontaneity of the earlier songs. The texts have become sophisticated and the music debased by that hybrid white American product—the gospel hymn." *Seventy Negro Spirituals*, VIII.

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533 of both Christianity and slavery lie first, the native racial
567 characteristics which were the really creative factors in
the spirituals; and second, the particular environment
114 which alone of all possible localities has called them into
178 being." This combination created them; Christianity
171 shaped and molded them; slavery lent fervor.

As to their sadness, long after the War and Emancipa-
533 tion even to the present day, the same yearning note has
152 persisted in Negro music. As two scholarly authorities
178 have well put it: "Slavery has passed, six decades of lib-
567 erty for the slave people have signalized the better civili-
zation, and there still remains among the Negroes the
same emotional nature, the same sad, plaintive, beautiful,
rhythmic, sorrow-feeling in their songs."[11] On internal
evidence it is impossible to date the spirituals. Those of
1880-1900 sound like those of 1840-1860.

Likewise in the prolific "Blues"[12] and the many songs
533 of jail, chain-gang, prison, and lonesomeness," which are
152 distinctly modern in composition, there is the same sad
appealing note, with much self-pity. There is also, be
(522) it said in passing, a good deal of humor, which is the com-
plement, not the opposite, of pathos.

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(529) scarcity of spirituals based on the birth or infancy of Christ: "The reason may be due in part to the fact that the anniversary of the birth of Christ was not, in the South, in any sense a sacred or religious holiday. Up to within recent years, at least, it has been celebrated chiefly with gunpowder and whiskey. It has there been the most secular, even the most profane of all holidays. In slavery times it was the one day on which the slaves were given a sort of freedom. The liberty of coming and going was greatly enlarged. On many plantations whiskey was distributed. The day was one given over to a good time; to singing, dancing and visiting; to guzzling, gluttony and debauchery. It is possible that it was a conscious part of the scheme of slavery to make Christmas a day on which the slaves through sheer excess of sensuous pleasure would forget their bonds."

[11] With the exception of a few statements here and there, like the following, the importance of environment has usually been overlooked: "If there is anything 'racial' about the spirituals and the blues, then there should be immediate ability to catch the intricate rhythm on the part of Negroes from Jamaica, Zanzibar, and Sierra Leone. Such is not the case, and we must conclude that they are the products of a certain American environment: The South. They are American folk-songs, built around
(113) Anglo-Saxon religious concepts." George E. Schuyler, "Correspondence," *The Nation*, July 14, 1926, p. 36.

[12] Odum and Johnson, *The Negro and His Songs*, p. 19.

[13] See the chapters on "Blues" and "Songs of Jail, Chain Gang, and Policemen" in
(113) Odum and Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, the chapter on "Blues" in Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk-Songs*, and W. C. Handy, *Blues, An Anthology*, A. and C. Boni, N. Y., 1926.

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
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181 their manners are in their own keeping. The men may have, for instance, as many
177 wives as they please, so long as they do not quarrel about such matters." And, I
567 notice, Southerners on our coast still tacitly observe this tradition.

When I began the work of actively retrieving slave songs, and instituted "sings"
123 at the Cabin in front of my cottage, I found it expedient to follow the same pro-
533 cedure. The group—silently, be it remembered—made it clear that such matters as
181 jail sentences and surplus wives were their affair, whereas my concern was limited to their music, although anything—such as drinking, "soldiering," or insubordination—which interfered with its proper presentation was distinctly within my province.

As a concrete example of the lengths to which the Negro carries his reluctance to give information, I can do no better than tell how Julia taught me a valuable lesson: never take anything for granted. After being my laundress for three winters, she became my cook in 1915, and for the fifteen years in all she enjoyed a precious secret. With her as intermediary I was able to hear the slave songs. She never sang a note on my place, and I assumed that she could not. But in 1927, at Mrs. Arnold's funeral, her dramatic moment arrived. With the group she had brought to my door, she stood beside the open grave, and she sang as well as the others. When I periodically ask why, in all those years, she never told me she could sing, she smiles quizzically, but says nothing. Perhaps she does not know herself.

181 However, it is just possible that an age-old compensation complex explains the
177 situation. I am convinced that the average Negro enjoys intensely knowing something that the white man does not, and the exquisite delight he derives from realizing that the white man has been bested in a little game makes up for any loss or
(123) indignity he may be obliged to endure. Julia's game was innocent and her loss was financial, but that such tactics may have a less pleasant side—aimed at the eventual discomfiture of an exacting employer—it may be well to remember.

181 Before leaving the subject of the Negro's secretiveness, it may be well to con-
177 sider this racial characteristic in relation to another that is quite as often mentioned by travelers in Africa: dread of derision.[a] It seems to me that the attitude of the
• 152 whites toward the blacks has never been calculated to encourage the latter to parade
186 their Africanisms. The slave trader's need of justification, and our ignorance of Africa and its culture, enabled him to persuade us that Africans were barbarians in

[a] Fear of ridicule enables African blackmailers with a gift of clever improvisation to collect tribute from their thin-skinned brothers—for the songs they do not sing.

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need of our "civilizing" influence.[7] The success of his propaganda is reflected in the words of Fanny Kemble, who wrote in her *Journal* that "all tongues—the most vulgar, as well as the self-styled most refined—have learned to turn the very name of their race into an insult and a reproach." Evidence of its pernicious effect on the Negroes themselves is also given by Sir Charles Lyell in his *Second Visit to the United States* (1845–1846). He asserts: "It is a good sign of the progress made in civilization by the native-born colored race that they speak of the Africanians with much of the contempt with which Europeans talk of Negroes." To the truth of these statements I can testify. I was cautioned as a child never to use the term African in the presence of our colored people for fear of hurting their feelings. Need we be surprised that the Negro denied all knowledge of Africa—even as Peter denied all knowledge of Christ!

Colored people are not the simple-minded, insensitive individuals (Illustration 9) that certain Southerners lead us to imagine when they jauntily say: "Negroes are like children and must be treated accordingly." As in every race, there are immature minds, but in my experience they size us up far better than we do them. I am inclined to agree with an observant Georgian who told me: "They know us better than we know ourselves." In consequence it seems to me advisable to make no definite assertions about the race, yet we do need every hint which will enable us to avoid such pitfalls as trap those unsuspecting souls who believe what they are told. Since Fanny Kemble's time we have seen in print all too many instances of the way the psychic Negroes obligingly tell unsuspecting listeners exactly what they wish to hear. Also, like their African cousins, our colored people are born actors; and an outsider with a pet theory about them can find ready confirmation of almost any notion.[8] The inquisitive college professor is particularly vulnerable, and when he becomes authoritative he is giving the Negro the opportunity he relishes above all things to laugh up his sleeve at the white man's gullibility.

Not all Negroes are like this. Some are loyalty itself; others hold themselves

[7] As late as 1902, Joseph A. Tillinghast, in The Negro in Africa and America, speaks of the "benighted savagery" of the African Negro and stresses the vast superiority of European culture. In the light of what is happening in Europe today, it seems to me wiser to say little about the blackness of the pot.

[8] From Fanny Kemble's account of her contact with her husband's slaves, it is ironically evident that they were the better actors. Their performance was so perfect that it carried conviction, and added to the difficulties encountered by Pierce Butler in his attempt to make a living out of his plantations.

A. [For Illustration 9, see Category 142, plate facing p. 64--Analyst]

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MOONLIGHT—STARLIGHT

53 In *Slave Songs of the United States*, the origin of a song similar to "Moonlight—Starlight" is attributed to St. Simon's Island by Colonel Trowbridge, who is quoted as saying "that it was sung at funerals in the night time—one of the most solemn and characteristic customs of the Negroes." Fanny Kemble, in her *Journal*, describes a "buryin'" that took place at the Butler Plantation in 1839:

Yesterday evening the burial of the poor man, Shadrach, took place. I had been applied to for a sufficient quantity of cotton cloth to make a winding-sheet for him, and just as the twilight was thickening into darkness I went with Mr. —— [Pierce Butler, her husband] to the cottage of one of the slaves . . . a cooper of the name of London . . . who was to perform the burial service. The coffin was laid on trestles in front of the cooper's cottage, and a large assemblage of the people had gathered around, many of the men carrying pine-wood torches, the fitful glare of which glanced over the strange assembly. . . . Presently the whole congregation uplifted their voices in a hymn, the first high wailing notes of which—sung all in unison, in the midst of these unwonted surroundings—sent a thrill through all my nerves. When the chant ceased cooper London began a prayer, and all the people knelt down in the sand, as I did also. . . . When the prayer was concluded we all rose, and, the coffin being taken up, proceeded to the people's burial-ground, when London read aloud portions of the funeral service from the Prayer-book. . . . The service ended with a short address from London upon the subject of Lazarus, and the confirmation which the story of his resurrection afforded our hopes. . . . When the coffin was lowered the grove was found to be partially filled with water—naturally enough, for the whole island is a mere swamp, off which the Altamaha is only kept from sweeping by the high dikes all around it. This seemed to shock and distress the people, and for the first time during the whole ceremony there were sounds of crying and exclamations of grief heard among them . . . and so we returned from one of the most striking religious ceremonies at which I ever assisted.

When Margaret, one of my star shouters, was buried a few years ago at Kelvin Grove, in the old slave yard on the marsh, I too was shocked to see the coffin lowered into the water, but in this instance such an occurrence was taken as a matter of course.

53 Of all the primitive songs this is the most plaintive as well as the most impressive:

Moonlight—Starlight
O-o-h [12] Moonlight
Believer what's the matter?
John lay the body down!
(Repeat)
John lay the body to the tomb
O-o-h—let me go!
John lay the body to the tomb
John lay the body down!
(Repeat)

[12] Sung with the lips closed. The accompanying piano arrangement is by Creighton Churchill.

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14. BLOW GABRIEL

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533 Undoubtedly the greater part of these songs originated under the stress of re-
786 ligious emotion, such as Laura showed when she strode to the middle of my yard
152 and, with a commanding arm lifted high, intoned musically, "Blow, Gabriel!" as
159 though sure of a response. Then she called again—louder this time—"Blow, Gabriel!" and still no answer. She waited a moment before calling at the top of her lungs, "Blow, Gabriel!"—and when nothing happened, she turned, complaining bitterly, gathered up the bunch of white oleanders she had laid beside me, and left as suddenly as she had come. Half chanting to Gabriel, she improvised as she went swiftly down the road, waving the flowers she had probably intended for the grave of her son, who lies in the old slave burying ground at Kelvin Grove.

786 It seems that earlier in the day she had shrieked and chanted, as is common
159 with those who get this type of religious hysteria. In the old days such excitement was a more usual and respected occurrence than now. The reference in old spirituals to "My head got wet wid de midnight dew" meant that under religious exaltation the individual wandered at night through wood and swamp, as Laura had for several days and nights before I saw her at the locked gate which barred her way to the plantation graveyard.

123 I called, "Where are you going?" She seemed to waken out of a dream and said,
786 "I forgot." Then she came closer, and impressively declaimed, "Miz' Parris'—I bin
787 sent by God to you. They say I'm crazy, an' they put me in jail nine days—but I'se
159 seen God!" After a long harangue delivered in an impassioned but disconnected way, she told me she had spent Tuesday night in Hell, that she'd been crucified. The blood had trickled down her back, the thorns had pierced her arms. She threw her arms out wide as though to show me. When she noticed they weren't clean, in an abashed aside she apologetically said, "I ain't wash 'em this mornin'." Then she went on, "You needn' tell me that God meant white folks an' colored people to sit down together."

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other denominations, I make no attempt to go into a description of usual church observances. My particular concern has been the preservation of the religious slave songs. Those of the Baptist Negroes—the most conservative sect on the Coast of Georgia—give greater evidence than the others of an African background. Coupled as they are with the most picturesque customs, they have come in for special consideration.

Although certain songs are peculiarly appropriate to such occasions as Easter and Communion, they cannot be rigidly classified according to the services which may have inspired them.[1] They were sung at any time, anywhere. The majority of them appear equally suited to church, prayer, and covenant meeting. However, the ceremonies connected with baptism, "settin'-up" with the dead, and burial mean so much to the Negro that a separate section of this Chapter is devoted to each of them. They appear to be connected with customs prevailing a century ago in the section of Africa from which the slaves were obtained. The significance attached to baptism in a river, or immersion on the outgoing tide, may tie up with the initiation rites connected with the river-worship of Dahomey; and anyone who reads what explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have to say about the Africans' concern with death will recognize that our Negroes display the same trait.

CHURCH, PRAYER, AND COVENANT MEETING

Patty Gardner[2] used to open the "South End" prayer meeting, held at Deacon Merchant's house, by singing the following song. As the other members joined in, they shook hands ceremoniously with their neighbors assembled in a circle.[3] The younger generation knew nothing of this custom until I had Old Quarterman come to the Cabin and "show them the way."

[1] Some may have come into existence while the slaves were at work—others were undoubtedly conceived under stress of religious emotion. In the old days a deacon, at the peak of his rhythmically chanted prayer, broke into song, in which those present joined. After a verse or two, he continued the prayer, ending his plea for mercy by singing with the others some appropriate slave hymn. It is unfortunate that this highly effective method of rousing the congregation should have lapsed in most churches. Now, the impassioned exhortation ends with a sudden drop into an ordinary conversational tone—like a dash of cold water in the face.

[2] Patty, while singing a religious song at work, would go into a trance-like state. Clarence told me he remembered seeing her moving rhythmically in a circle around her cabin, a dish towel in one hand and a discarded tin can (highly prized in those days) in the other. She tried the can over and over, totally oblivious of time or surroundings.

[3] This procedure is mentioned by Sir Charles Lyell in his Second Visit to the United States.

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"SETTIN'-UP"

The custom of "settin'-up" with the dead still prevails among the Negroes, who even go so far as to ask for such a privilege on the death of a white employer to whom they are devoted. Mrs. Shadman told me that when her grandmother, Margaret Cater, died at Kelvin Grove, her family's ex-slaves came all day "to see the face." At dusk they appeared again and sat up with "Ole Miss" through the night, singing, moaning, and praying until sun-up. When Mrs. Shadman died this year, two young colored men whom she had befriended since childhood continued the custom and sat up with the body.

In some districts a "settin'-up," or "wake," as such a ceremony is now called, is more emotional than in others, and certain families are known to be extremely excitable on such occasions. A man who works for me now and then said he did not like to go to a "settin'-up" because "they holler so much." [18] A wake held at the home of the deceased is likely to be a quieter affair than one held in a church, where the mourners are apt to display a frenzy of grief. When the body is taken from the church, the "hollerin' " begins in earnest. I have always wondered if the stimulation of an audience had anything to do with the difference.

At a private "settin'-up" a big fire of logs in front of the cabin lasts through the night, and rude benches, made of boards laid on sections of a tree trunk, are placed around it. Quantities of coffee in a pot beside the fire, and a large carton of soda crackers help revive the tired mourners and keep them awake.

The Negroes often have a premonition of death. On St. Simon's, Deacon Henry Armstrong, who had been ailing for some months, realized his time was short, and sent for his family and friends. When they arrived he was eating his supper of fish, grits, and coffee. Later, when he stood up, moved about, and began preaching his own funeral sermon, as was sometimes done, his hearers wondered if he was "touched in the head." He called upon one deacon to sing "Old-Time Religion" and then upon another for a prayer. When a member of the group came forward to pray, Henry told him not to proceed, that he was not worthy. A "sister" came to shake his hand and say good-bye; he told her she must go to her father and mother, and beg their pardon for the wrong she had done them. She did as

[18] Such behavior is in line with established African tradition. In Astley's Collection of Voyages and Travels it is stated that "the cry . . . is sometimes a fortnight or month after the decease. . . . They begin with crying and at night they go to singing and dancing, and so continue till they break-up."

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"preach the funeral," [24] the St. Simon's Negroes would row all the way to Savannah —over eighty miles—to get him. They landed at Frederica, where the First African Baptist Church was located.

At Aaron's funeral Laura gave the time-honored dramatic touch by growing hysterical, throwing up her arms, and screaming: "Good-bye Aaron—y'u gone forever." While the clods were shoveled upon the coffin, singing providentially kept us from hearing the sound. Different men, headed by the undertaker, took turns filling in the grave. The way they joked and laughed as they worked rather shocked me. I understand, however, that Africans show the same levity after distressing occasions.

M. H. Kingsley, in *Travels in West Africa*, mentions the intense love of the African for funerals, and, according to the descriptions given by other explorers, there is a striking similarity in the burial customs of the natives and their rural American cousins. In Africa it is believed that the position of the ghost in the other world requires that the funeral be as expensive as the family can possibly provide. Furthermore, without a fitting ceremony the departed spirit cannot reach its final destination, but lingers among the living, making conditions very uncomfortable for them. The Negroes of our Southern states show the same feeling about funerals. They spare no expense in making them elaborate affairs. One that took place on St. Simon's years ago will long be remembered: "Why, Mrs. Parris', it cost four hundred dollars. They sent to Savannah for flowers, and she was buried in new white slippers that cost six dollars . . . !" I notice that the American Negro, no matter what the work or business in hand, puts it aside for such an event. To pay the cost of a funeral that will be a credit to the corpse as well as his family, the survivors will mortgage what property they may have, if they have not been so provident as to take out an insurance policy, join a "Bury League," or pay to some society or lodge dues which range from ten to twenty-five cents a week.

[24] When Qualterman's son-in-law died, his daughter said to me: "Tell the old man my husband died three weeks ago and the funeral will be preached next Sunday." Then she asked me if I would please give her a black hat. A Northern friend frequently sent me boxes of summer hats in the autumn. If the original owners could have seen them in winter on the dusky wearers, they would have been surprised. The fun of fitting out the singers with becoming hats has always made me wonder if I hadn't missed my calling.